

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to Wakefield Metropolitan District Council following publication of the inspection report on 23 December 2015, which found the provider to be inadequate overall. During the visit, inspectors focused on the themes identified at the first scoping visit to the service in February 2016. Inspectors spoke with a range of stakeholders including directors, governors, staff and learners as well as analysing a range of documentation and performance data.

At the inspection in November 2015, the effectiveness of leadership and management was judged as inadequate. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for learners was judged to require improvement. Adult learning programmes and apprenticeships were both judged to require improvement.

The Adult Community Education Service (ACES) is currently undergoing a period of significant change due to a strategic and operational restructure of the service. Leaders expect to conclude this restructure in June 2016 in preparation for the new academic year beginning in August 2016.

Themes

Improvement in teaching, learning and assessment including English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers are working hard to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result of improved training of lesson observers and moderation of lesson observations, observations carried out between September 2015 and April 2016 represent a more realistic assessment of teaching that now focuses on learners' achievement and progress rather than teacher performance. A joint lesson observation conducted during the visit identified that the observer correctly noted the strengths and areas for improvement of the session.

Using the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection, leaders and managers have initiated a range of pilot projects on assessment, ESOL, monitoring individual learning plans and tracking of learners' progress on non-accredited programmes. The pilot projects demonstrate a positive impact on teaching, learning and assessment including the setting of clearer targets and their diligent monitoring by staff in order to progress learners' knowledge and skills swiftly. However, leaders and managers have not yet implemented these successful strategies across the whole service.

Evaluation of the pilot project for ESOL learners has brought about significant improvements to the provision. These include changes to course structure and improved initial assessment and induction. As a result, retention and achievement have improved, learners' feedback is very positive and unexplained absences have significantly decreased.

Retention and achievement on GCSE mathematics courses for the last two years were good, with all learners remaining on programme. In-year progress predicts a similar outcome in the current academic year. Staff are using the good practice that exists to improve retention and attainment in GCSE English. The preparation and use of interesting and engaging resource materials are effective in incorporating English and mathematics into the curriculum and are supporting learners well to improve their skill levels.

A review of individual learning plans identified target setting, the recording of initial assessment and giving constructive feedback as areas for improvement. Senior managers have agreed and put in place, in April 2016, a revised individual learning plan. Inspectors will judge the impact of the new document at the next monitoring visit.

Improvement in the effectiveness of governance, Insufficient progress leadership and improvement planning arrangements

Since the last inspection, leaders of the council commissioned a review of governance of ACES, which they published on 6 February 2016. The review identifies that swift and decisive action is required to ensure that a governing body is formed to secure rapid improvement to the service.

In March 2016, the council assembled an interim improvement board to address the areas that require improvement, as highlighted by the previous inspection. The improvement board has had little discernible impact due to its relevant infancy and the fact that it has not implemented many actions for a number of months due to the imminent restructure of the service. The members of this improvement board will transfer to the newly formed governing body in May 2016.

Members of the improvement board are highly committed to improving the service and are working very closely with senior managers to develop an improved understanding of the service. Managers present performance reports to members at improvement board meetings. The members provide suitable challenge to managers to address areas of underperformance. However, members do not receive information on the progress that all learners are making on their courses in relation to their starting points; this impedes their ability to judge accurately the performance of the service and the progress that groups of learners are making.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that arrangements to assure the quality of key processes that relate to the strategic and operational management of the

service are sufficient. Many processes take place on an ad-hoc basis with no oversight or coordination by leaders and managers.

Leaders and managers are failing to ensure that the quality improvement plan and post inspection action plan detail sufficiently all of the targets that they need to achieve. Targets are not specific or concise enough to enable them to measure progress in achieving their objectives.

Managers have not included the recommendations from reviews that have taken place since the previous inspection in any improvement plans. As a result, they have not prioritised the required improvements for leaders, governors and managers to review.

Improvement in performance management and professional development arrangements **Insufficient progress**

Managers have used the results of observations of teaching, learning and assessment effectively to identify tutors who are underperforming. Tutors have an annual review resulting in a personal development plan that takes account of action plans from observations. Managers are closely monitoring individual action plans and focusing more clearly on the impact teaching has on promoting learning. However, the quality of target setting in action plans is not consistently specific enough to promote rapid improvement and managers do not link targets to a formal performance management system. This makes it difficult for managers to identify the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment across the service.

Since September 2015, professional development activities have helped to create an inclusive culture where all staff, whatever their role, focus on supporting learners to achieve their goals. Following the proposed service-wide restructuring in June 2016, extensive professional development is planned to ensure a consistent application of new processes and ways of working. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of this work at future monitoring visits.

Improvement in the achievement and progress monitoring of all learners **Reasonable progress**

Data provided by managers suggests that they have been successful in halting a three-year decline in achievement rates. Managers expect four out of five learners in the current year to complete their course successfully; this is a small increase on the previous year.

A successful learner-tracking pilot project involving 14 adult skills courses, five adult and community learning courses and 15 tutors, clearly shows improvement in learners' progress and achievement. Managers will not put the new monitoring system arising from the pilot project in place for all learners until the restructuring of the service is complete in June 2016. Inspectors will evaluate its effectiveness in future re-inspection monitoring visits.

Managers are diligently monitoring the gaps in retention and achievement of all learners, particularly those from African, Pakistani and other Asian backgrounds. They meticulously plan and carry out interventions to improve the attainment of these groups. However, data on the progress of different groups was not available at the visit due to not all of these learners taking part in the progress monitoring pilot project. Inspectors will evaluate further the progress of these groups of learners at the next re-inspection monitoring visit.

Improvement in the curriculum to meet local employment and skills priorities

Insufficient progress

Since the last inspection, managers and staff have reviewed their course offer. Managers have conducted an in-depth evaluation of the local employment and skills priorities within the district of Wakefield and are now realigning the course offer to meet these priorities.

However, managers have failed to ensure that there is any strategic oversight or delivery plan in the current academic year, resulting in them not targeting public funds to those who need support the most. The 2016/17 statement of priorities and the associated delivery plan are due to be published in April 2016, in preparation for the new academic year. The effectiveness of the service in meeting the needs of the local employment and skills priorities will be evaluated at future re-inspection monitoring visits.

Improvement in data management systems

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have started to address the lack of accurate and timely data on the attainment of learners, which was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. An extensive range of reports, produced on a regular basis, inform managers on the performance of the service. Managers analyse and discuss these reports at length at weekly performance meetings, celebrate successes and plan developments when they identify that improvements are needed.

Managers have not yet utilised fully the service's data management software to provide highly analytical information to identify areas of concern and plan improvements at a brisk pace.

Managers have successfully completed a pilot project to monitor the progress of learners on a minority of adult learning and community learning courses. This has improved tutors' and managers' understanding of learners' progress on these courses. However, they are not using the resulting data to enhance the existing performance information and provide accurate attainment forecasts. Managers acknowledge that the current method of collating and analysing the progress of learners is not sustainable and are investing in a progress monitoring tool to integrate with existing information systems.

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